

and to area Civil War battlefields himself, in order to make the trip more affordable for his students. He accompanies his students on these educational tours. He has held graduation ceremonies in conjunction with the Firth High School graduation ceremonies to graduate local veterans who enlisted in the military prior to graduating from high school. Named "Operation Veteran," this idea has spread to at least 10 neighboring high schools.

Stewart is responsible for the display of photos of all the local veterans in the high school hallways, complete with unit designation, years, branch, and wars. There are over 200 veterans whose photos are displayed at Firth High School. He conducts the Veterans Day program at the high school every year. In 2007, 87 veterans and 600 people from the local community attended the ceremony.

As a teacher, Stewart brings history to life. With close to 40 students in his military history class every year, Stewart is proud to be able to share experiences firsthand with them, like earlier this year when an 87-year-old veteran who served aboard the USS *Pennsylvania* at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, told his story to Stewart's class. In fact, Stewart's extraordinary efforts were recently rewarded when he was honored as one of three Idaho recipients of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Idaho Teacher of the Year for 2007-2008.

Stewart has been the featured speaker at more than 40 veterans, civic, or church groups, talking about veterans and their influence on our Nation. He has devoted many years, much energy, and great passion to remind us, young and old, that freedom is not free and that those who have made tremendous sacrifices for our freedom are a heart-felt thank-you away.

I am glad to recognize and thank Stewart for his ongoing contributions to inspire patriotism, recognize veterans, and promote the civic education of our children.●

ADEL-DESOTO-MINBURN COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes, today, to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Adel-DeSoto-Minburn Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools.

Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Adel-DeSoto-Minburn Community School District received a 2003 Harkin grant totaling \$454,290 which it used to help build an addition to Adel Primary School and to renovate classrooms in the building. This school is a modern, state-of-the-art facility that befits the educational ambitions and excellence of this school district. Indeed, it is the kind of school facility that every child in America deserves. The district also received a 1999 fire safety grant for \$75,000 to make fire system, exit lighting and electrical improvements in the district.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Adel-DeSoto-Minburn Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—president Tim Canney, vice president Kim Roby, Sally Bird, Jen Heins and Steve Meyer and former board members Pat Steele, Darrell Weems and Paula James. I would also like to recognize superintendent Greg Dufoe and former superintendent Timothy Hoffman.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin school grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is that the average age of school buildings in the United States is nearly 50 years.

Too often, our children visit ultra-modern shopping malls and gleaming sports arenas on weekends, but during the week go to school in rundown or antiquated facilities. This sends exactly the wrong message to our young people about our priorities. We have to do better.

That is why I am deeply grateful to the professionals and parents in the Adel-DeSoto-Minburn Community School District. There is no question that a quality public education for every child is a top priority in that community. I salute them, and wish them a very successful new school year.●

CENTER POINT-URBANA COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes, today, to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Center Point-Urbana Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Center Point-Urbana Community School District received a 2002 Harkin grant totaling \$125,500 which it used to help build a new health and fitness center addition which is used not only by the school, but by the community as a whole. The district also received two fire safety grants totaling \$42,152 which it used to replace emergency systems throughout the district.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Center Point-Urbana Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—president Carol Engelken, Mark Boies, Tammy Carolan, Scott Millikin and Dan Jones as well as former president Connie Elgin and former members Kelly Bonar and Todd Ramsey. I would also like to recognize superintendent Alan Marshall, former superintendent Richard Whitehead, athletic director Dan Rosendahl and board secretary Kathy Thomas.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin school grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is